IN THE AMAZON JUNGLE

ADVENTURES IN REMOTE PARTS OF THE UPPER AMAZON RIVER, INCLUDING A SOJOURN AMONG CANNIBAL INDIANS

BY

ALGOT LANGE

EDITED IN PART BY J. ODELL HAUSER

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

FREDERICK S. DELLENBAUGH

WITH 86 ILLUSTRATIONS FROM ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press
1912

died from the hemorrhage following the operation.

Largely through the danger of the attack from this scourge, though perhaps not entirely, the natives have adopted the method of bathing in use. A plunge into the river is unheard of, and bath-houses are constructed so as to make this unnecessary. A hole about eighteen inches square is cut in the middle of the floor—built immediately above the water—through which the bather, provided with a calabash or gourd of the bread-fruit tree, dips water up and pours it over himself after he has first examined it carefully. The indigenous Indians, living in the remote parts of the forest, do not use this mode of protection, but cover the vulnerable portions of the body carefully with strips of bark, which render complete immersion less dangerous.

During my walks in the forest I often came across snakes of considerable length, but never found any difficulty in killing them, as they were sluggish in their movements and seemed to be inoffensive. The rubber-workers, who had no doubt had many encounters with reptiles, told me about large *sucurujus* or boa-constrictors, which had their homes in the river not many miles from headquarters.

They told me that these snakes were in possession of hypnotic powers, but this, like many other assertions, should be taken with a large grain of salt. However, I will relate an incident which occurred while I lived at Floresta, and in which I have absolute faith, as I had the opportunity of talking to the persons involved in the affair.

José Perreira, a rubber-worker, had left headquarters after having delivered his weekly report on the rubber extracted, and was paddling his canoe at a good rate down the stream, expecting to reach his hut before midnight. Arriving at a recess in the banks formed by the confluence of a small creek called Igarapé do Inferno, or the Creek of Hell, he thought that he heard the noise of some game, probably a deer or tapir, drinking, and he silently ran his canoe to the shore, where he fastened it to a branch, at the same time holding his rifle in readiness. Finally, as he saw nothing, he returned to the canoe and continued his way down-stream.

Hardly more than ten yards from the spot, he stopped again and listened. He heard only the distant howling of a monkey. This he was used to on his nightly trips. No! there was something else! He could not say

ANOTHER ALLIGATOR FROM LAKE INNOCENCE

it was a sound. It was a strange something that called him back to the bank that he had left but a few minutes before. He fastened his canoe again to the same branch and crept up to the same place, feeling very uneasy and uncomfortable, but seeing nothing that could alarm him—nothing that he could draw the bead of his rifle on. Yet, something there was! For the second time he left, without being able to account for the mysterious force that lured him to this gloomy, moon-lit place on the dark, treacherous bank. In setting out in the stream again he decided to fight off the uncanny, unexplainable feeling that had called him back, but scarcely a stone's throw from the bank he had the same desire to return,—a desire that he had never before experienced. He went again, and looked, and meditated over the thing that he did not understand.

He had not drunk *cachassa* that day and was consequently quite sober; he had not had fever for two weeks and was in good health physically as well as mentally; he had never so much indulged in the dissipations of civilisation that his nerves had been affected; he had lived all his life in these surroundings and knew no fear of man or beast. And

now, this splendid type of manhood, free and unbound in his thoughts and unprejudiced by superstition, broke down completely and hid his face in his hands, sobbing like a child in a dark room afraid of ghosts. He had been called to this spot three times without knowing the cause, and now, the mysterious force attracting him, as a magnet does a piece of iron, he was unable to move. Helpless as a child he awaited his fate.

Luckily three workers from headquarters happened to pass on their way to their homes, which lay not far above the "Creek of Hell," and when they heard sobbing from the bank they called out.

The hypnotised *seringueiro* managed to state that he had three times been forced, by some strange power, to the spot where he now was, unable to get away, and that he was deadly frightened. The rubber-workers, with rifles cocked, approached in their canoe, fully prepared to meet a jaguar, but when only a few yards from their comrade they saw directly under the root where the man was sitting the head of a monstrous boa-constrictor, its eyes fastened on its prey. Though it was only a few feet from him, he had been unable to see it.

RUBBER-WORKERS' HOME NEAR LAKE INNOCENCE

One of the men took good aim and fired, crushing the head of the snake, and breaking the spell, but the intended victim was completely played out and had to lie down in the bottom of the canoe, shivering as if with ague.

The others took pains to measure the length of the snake before leaving. It was 79 palmas or 52 feet 8 inches. In circumference it measured 11 palmas, corresponding to a diameter of 28 inches. Its mouth, they said, was two palmas or sixteen inches, but how they mean this to be understood I do not know.

This event happened while I was living at headquarters. I had a long talk with Perreira, but could not shake his statement, nor that of the three others; nevertheless, I remained a sceptic as to this alleged charming or mesmeric power of the snakes, at least so far as man is concerned.

At that time we were awaiting the arrival of the monthly launch from the town of Remate de Males, and had spent a day weighing rubber at the camp of one of the employees, half a day's journey from headquarters. The rubber-pellets were loaded into our large canoe to take up to Floresta. We spent the evening drinking black coffee and eating some large, sweet pineapples,

whereafter we all took a nap lasting until midnight, when we got up to start on our night trip. It had been considered best to travel at night, when it was nice and cool with none of the pestering insects to torture us, and we were soon paddling the heavy canoe at a merry rate, smoking our pipes and singing in the still, dark night. Soon we rounded a point where the mighty trees, covered with orchids and other parasitic plants, sent their branches down to the very water which in its depths was hiding the dreaded water-snakes. The only sound we heard was the weird calling of the night-owl, the "Mother of the Moon" as the Indians call it. Except this and the lapping sound of water, as we sped along, nothing disturbed the tranquillity of the night.

I was in the act of lighting another pipe when one of the men cried out:

"What 's this?"

We all stopped paddling and stared ahead at a large dark object, resting on a moon-lit sand-bar not far from us. Then someone said, "*Sucuruju.*" Few people can comprehend the feeling that creeps into one's heart when this word is pronounced, under such circumstances, in the far-off forest, in the middle of the night. The word means

HARPOONING A LARGE STING-RAY

He seized the harpoon, and with a powerful swing sent it into the water

boa-constrictor, but it meant a lot more at this moment. An indescribable feeling of awe seized me. I knew now that I was to face the awful master of the swamps, the great silent monster of the river, of which so much had been said, and which so few ever meet in its lair.

Running the canoe ashore we advanced in single file. I now had a chance to inspect the object. On a soft, muddy sand-bar, half hidden by dead branches, I beheld a somewhat cone-shaped mass about seven feet in height. From the base of this came the neck and head of the snake, flat on the ground, with beady eyes staring at us as we slowly advanced and stopped. The snake was coiled, forming an enormous pile of round, scaly monstrosity, large enough to crush us all to death at once. We had stopped at a distance of about fifteen feet from him, and looked at each other. I felt as if I were spellbound, unable to move a step farther or even to think or act on my own initiative.

The snake still made no move, but in the clear moonlight I could see its body expand and contract in breathing; its yellow eyes seeming to radiate a phosphorescent light. I felt no fear, nor any inclination to retreat,

yet I was now facing a beast that few men had ever succeeded in seeing. Thus we stood looking at each other, scarcely moving an eyelid, while the great silent monster looked at us. I slid my right hand down to the holster of my automatic pistol, the 9mm. Luger, and slowly removed the safety lock, at the same time staring into the faces of the men. In this manner I was less under the spell of the mesmerism of the snake, and could to some extent think and act. I wheeled around while I still held control of my faculties, and, perceiving a slight movement of the snake's coils, I fired point-blank at the head, letting go the entire chamber of soft-nose bullets. Instantly the other men woke up from their trance and in their turn fired, emptying their Winchesters into the huge head, which by this time was raised to a great height above us, loudly hissing in agony.

Our wild yelling echoed through the deep forest. The snake uncoiled itself and writhing with pain made for the water's edge. By this time we were relieved of the terrible suspense, but we took care to keep at a respectful distance from the struggling reptile and the powerful lashing of its tail, which would have killed a man with one blow.

SHOOTING FISH ON LAKE INNOCENCE
Fitting one of his five-foot arrows to the bow-string, he sent it into the head of the *pirarucu*

After half an hour the struggles grew weaker, yet we hesitated to approach even when it seemed quiet and had its head and a portion of its body submerged in the water. We decided to stay through the night and wait here a day, as I was very anxious to skin the snake and take the trophy home to the States as a souvenir of a night's adventure in this far-off jungle of the Amazon. We went up in the bushes and lit a fire, suspended our hammocks to some tree-trunks, and slept soundly not more than ten yards from the dying leviathan.

We all got up before sunrise, had our coffee in haste, and ran down to see the snake. It was dead, its head practically shot to pieces. We set to work, stretching the huge body out on the sand-bar, and by eight o'clock we had the entire snake flat on the ground, ready to measure and skin.

It was a most astonishing sight, that giant snake lying there full length, while around it gathered six Amazon Indians and the one solitary New Yorker, here in the woods about as far from civilisation as it is possible to get. I proceeded to take measurements and used the span between my thumb and little finger tips as a unit, knowing that this was exactly eight inches.

Beginning at the mouth of the snake, I continued to the end and found that this unit was contained eighty-four times. Thus 84 times 8 divided by 12 gives exactly 56 feet as the total length. In circumference, the unit, the "palma," was contained 8 times and a fraction, around the thickest part of the body. From this I derived the diameter 2 feet 1 inch.

These measurements are the result of very careful work. I went from the tail to the nose over again so as to eliminate any error, and then asked the men with me also to take careful measurements in their own manner, which only confirmed the figures given above.

Then we proceeded to skin the snake, which was no easy task under the fierce sun now baking our backs. Great flocks of *urubus*, or vultures, had smelled the carcass and were circling above our heads waiting for their share of the spoils. Each man had his section to work on, using a wooden club and his machete. The snake had been laid on its belly and it was split open, following the spinal column throughout its length, the ventral part being far too hard and unyielding. About two o'clock in the after-

THE PIRARUCU
They stuck a pole through the great gills of the *pirarucu*

noon we had the work finished and the carcass was thrown into the river, where it was instantly set upon by the vigilant *piranhas* and alligators.

Standing in front of this immense skin I could not withhold my elation.

"Men," I said, "here am I on this the 29th day of July, 1910, standing before a snake-skin the size of which is wonderful. When I return to my people in the United States of America, and tell them that I have seen and killed a boa-constrictor nearly eighteen metres in length, they will laugh and call me a man with a bad tongue."

Whereupon my friend, the chief, rose to his full height and exclaimed in a grieved tone: "Sir, you say that your people in the north will not believe that we have snakes like this or even larger. That is an insult to Brazilians, yet you tell us that in your town Nova York there are *barracãos* that have thirty-five or even forty stories on top of each other! How do you expect us to believe such an improbable tale as that?"

I was in a sad plight between two realities of such mighty proportions that they could be disbelieved in localities far removed from each other.

We brought the skin to headquarters, where I prepared it with arsenical soap and boxed it for later shipment to New York. The skin measured, when dried, 54 feet 8 inches, with a width of 5 feet 1 inch.

Kind reader, if you have grown weary of my accounts of the reptilian life of the Amazon, forgive me, but such an important rôle does this life play in the every-day experience of the brave rubber-workers that the descriptions could not be omitted. A story of life in the Amazon jungle without them would be a deficient one, indeed.

There is a bird in the forests, before referred to, called by the Indians "*A mae da lua*," or the "Mother of the Moon." It is an owl and makes its habitation in the large, dead, hollow trees in the depths of the jungle, far away from the river front, and it will fly out of its nest only on still, moonlit nights, to pour forth its desolate and melancholy song. This consists of four notes uttered in a major key, then a short pause lasting but a few seconds, followed by another four notes in the corresponding minor key. After a little while the last two notes in the minor key will be heard and then all is still.

AMAZONIAN GAME-FISH
These waters contain great quantities of fine g

022873

ORDER FOR PHOTODUPLICATION TO

THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS PHOTODUPLICATION SERVICE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20540

MAKE CHECK OR MONEY ORDER PAYABLE TO LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, PHOTODUPLICATION SERVICE

Job Number X

LC 26-15 (rev 3/78)

5-19
Date of Request

Customer's Order No.

PS–
Deposit Account No.

X Mail ☐ Pick Up Phone:

Rec'd 5-22

Name GARY / MANGIACOPRA

Address 7 ARLMONT ST

MILFORD, CONN Zip 06460

Attn:

Office	Reference	Laboratory		Acct'g
PK 5/21	JK 5/21 6-2 ho			

NOTICE
WARNING CONCERNING COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, U.S. Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material.

Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purpose in excess of "fair use", that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgement, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law.

Signature _____
(I hereby note the above and also accept the conditions on the reverse of this page.)

Request complies with
☐ *108(g)(2) Guidelines (CCG)*
☐ *other provisions of copyright (CCL)*

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

☒ Electrostatic Positive Prints (Xerox) ☐ Microfilm ☐ Photograph ☐

F2546 L2

SEE ATTACHED

p. 217-38 + Title page
(relates to the

* Minim-

	Exp. @ $	☐ Negative	☒ Positive
			$5.00*
	Exp. @ $		
	WHICH BY EITHER PROCESS. @ $		
	@ $		
			3.00
			1.40
	End		$9.40

Reel 15
6/2180
0 -st.

22874

ailing label—Please PRINT or TYPE.

Zip 06460